United Nations E/2008/SR.7

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

24 June 2008

Original: English

Special meeting on the global food crisis

Provisional summary record of the 7th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 20 May 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Mérorès ..... (Haiti)

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08-34689 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Opening of the meeting

Video message from Mr. Bingu wa Mutharika, President of Malawi

1. **Mr. Mutharika** (President of Malawi) said that one of the major causes of the global food crisis was lack of a global policy framework recognizing food and agriculture as a top priority. Another issue had been the international community's lack of understanding of the national dynamics of agriculture and food production, national policy orientation and interventions, and the fears of local populations. Large-scale farming was not effective in countries with little land and a majority of peasant farmers. In such countries, it was more important to increase farmers' productivity so as to create a surplus for marketing. Global monitoring of food production, marketing and distribution was also of crucial importance.

2. Malawi had invested heavily in agriculture and irrigation, providing farmers with subsidized inputs as well as with training on application of the inputs and farming methods. As a result, Malawi had enjoyed a considerable surplus over the period 2006-2007 and was expecting another surplus for the current period. It had also been able to export and, in some cases, donate food to neighbouring countries.

3. Political commitment and consensus were essential in order to bring about a change in policy. Rather than trying to impose a one-size-fits-all formulas on countries, international institutions should engage in a dialogue with country policymakers at the local level in order to assess their needs. It was also important for the international community to encourage developing countries to produce larger quantities of food themselves, perhaps by supplementing food aid with investment in agricultural production.

4. He appealed to the international community and individual Governments to give higher priority to agriculture and food security and to engage in a dialogue to explore new alternatives for ensuring food security, in which global interests would have to be considered alongside narrower national interests.

Video message from Mr. Gordon Brown, Prime Minister, United Kingdom

5. **Mr. Brown** (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom) welcomed the decision of the Organization and the World Bank to work together under the leadership of the Secretary-General to devise a comprehensive and coordinated international response to the global food crisis. The immediate challenge was to provide for those worst affected by the crisis by responding generously to the World Food Programme's (WFP) appeals for additional funds. In the longer term, it was essential to support social protection programmes to ensure that poor people's basic needs were met and to focus increasingly on rural areas, where agricultural development was a priority. The Governments of countries receiving support from donors needed to make greater efforts in implementing sound policies.

6. Investment and agricultural research were essential components of a sustainable solution. In addition, rich countries must stop undermining the livelihoods of the poorest through agricultural subsidies and dumping; further reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and United States Farm Bill was needed in that regard.

7. Challenges at the global level included ensuring a fair global trading system. Food should be a central focus of the upcoming Group of Eight Summit and the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in September 2008. The United Kingdom was committed to doing its part, and had already contributed to food, social protection and monitoring initiatives, as well as international research on agriculture targeted at small-scale farmers. He expressed the hope that the Doha trade negotiations would soon come to a successful close.

Introductory statement by the President of the Economic and Social Council

8. **The President** said that the current global food crisis threatened to undermine the modest progress achieved in recent years to alleviate world poverty and hunger, as well as the political and economic stability of Governments in the most vulnerable areas. Humanitarian needs must be addressed immediately, but it was also crucial to ensure sufficient food supplies in the future through increased agricultural production. Accordingly, agriculture must again

become a key point on the development agenda. He welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. The Council stood ready to contribute to the resolution of the crisis, including by convening round-table and panel discussions on various aspects of food security during the high-level and coordination segments of its substantive session in July. In addition, the Council's humanitarian segment would feature a panel discussion on humanitarian issues related to global food aid.

9. The Council needed to consider how best to address the issue of food security as part of its long-term agenda and needed to muster the resources and political will to successfully end the current crisis in a lasting manner.

Statement by the President of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly

10. **Mr. Kerim** (President of the General Assembly) said that the global food crisis required a coordinated response by the international community and he commended the Secretary-General for establishing the Task Force. Alleviating the impact of the food crisis should be the first step in a series of broader measures to be taken by the international community to tackle the crisis. Donors must act now to support WFP's call for US$ 750 million to meet emergency needs and investment in agriculture must become a priority. Moreover, States should work to create a more level playing field so that farmers in developing countries could benefit from higher prices. All such elements should be taken into consideration in the Task Force's plan, to be presented at the upcoming High-level Conference on World Food Security in Rome.

11. Rising oil prices had contributed significantly to the rise in food prices. A sustainable solution to the crisis must therefore be linked to oil price stability and efforts to tackle climate change.

12. The General Assembly must play a lead role in launching initiatives and achieving results. He had invited the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, to brief the General Assembly on the status of the comprehensive action plan in preparation for the upcoming Conference in Rome. He supported the idea of convening a special session of the General Assembly to discuss further steps contributing to a unified strategy as well as to immediate actions.

Address by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations

13. **Ms. Migiro** (Deputy Secretary-General) said that the current situation demanded urgent, coordinated international action to prevent similar crises in the future. It was crucial to devise new and effective development strategies, including technical and financial assistance to farmers. The newly established Task Force would soon develop a comprehensive strategy for immediate and long-term action in four priority areas, namely, meeting emergency needs, strengthening local populations, helping small-scale farmers boost production, and reinforcing local and national Governments in their own responses to the crisis.

14. In the long term, the international community needed to increase research and development support for agricultural development, particularly in Africa. It was of utmost importance to move the Doha Development Round towards a successful conclusion, with a view to stimulating agricultural development. That presupposed, in part, a breakthrough on agricultural subsidies and tariffs in developed countries. Finally, in contemplating potential solutions to the food crisis, it was crucial to examine the multitude of causes carefully, including the growing use of biofuels.

Statement by the President of the Security Council

15. **Mr. Sawers** (President of the Security Council) said that while food security might exacerbate issues already on the Security Council agenda or raise new issues, the primary responsibility for addressing food security itself lay outside the Security Council. The Security Council supported the efforts of the Economic and Social Council, and the United Nations system more generally, and therefore warmly welcomed the Council's debate.

Keynote address by Mr. Joachim von Braun, Director-General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

16. **Mr. von Braun** (International Food Policy Research Institute) said that the food price crisis had hit a world that had a more unequal distribution of income than ever before, a world that had left the poorest behind.

17. The complex causes of the food and agriculture crisis required a comprehensive response, and he suggested two sets of policy actions: an emergency package of actions to be taken immediately and a resilience package of actions to be phased in immediately but whose impact might take time.

18. The four actions of the emergency package would be to: expand emergency humanitarian assistance; eliminate agricultural export bans; undertake fast-impact food production programmes in key areas; and change biofuel policies.

19. In order to expand emergency response and humanitarian assistance, world preparedness to take action on food prices must be improved and resources made available to agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP) must be price-adjusted. Food transfers should be targeted to the poorest people, with a focus on early childhood nutrition, regions in distress and school feeding. Those measures could be expected to protect the food consumption levels of people served by existing programmes, and increased funding would prevent further deterioration of food and nutrition security and increase emergency preparedness.

20. Agricultural export bans among developing countries had created a new trade policy theatre. Governments had a legitimate interest in caring for their citizens first; hence, the problem of export bans should not be addressed country by country but by an ad hoc forum of global players negotiating according to a code of conduct and in a spirit of mutual trust. At the very least, export trade for humanitarian purposes should be reopened immediately. Those measures could be expected to stabilize grain price fluctuations and reduce price levels by 30 per cent.

21. Fast-impact food production programmes required access to seeds, fertilizers and credit for the small farm sector — in other words, the traditional "Green Revolution" package. Carefully subsidized programmes for seed and water should involve the private sector from the beginning and facilitate a transition to market-based arrangements. Such fast-impact production programmes would jumpstart agricultural growth in the short term, create opportunities to earn income during the crisis, and lead to lower prices.

22. Changing biofuel policies would make more grains and oilseeds available for food and feed. Measures would include freezing biofuel production at current levels, reducing production or imposing a moratorium on biofuels based on grains and oilseeds until prices came down to reasonable levels according to supply and demand. A grain-based biofuels moratorium might bring maize prices down by about 20 per cent and, as a consequence, decrease wheat prices by about 10 per cent.

23. The four actions of the resilience package would be to: calm markets; invest in social protection; scale up investments for sustained agricultural growth; and complete the WTO Doha Round. As regards markets, since speculation was mainly a consequence, not a cause, of the price crisis, over-regulation would be an inappropriate response. Surveillance and regulatory measures should be taken to curb excessive speculation in agricultural commodity markets. A coordinated set of pledges for a modest grain reserve to be made by the main grain-producing countries should be established at global and regional levels. A global intelligence network should inform the management of those international coordinated reserves. From that initiative, the pooling of global or regional public stocks, complemented by an International Monetary Fund import-financing facility, would allow countries with greater food deficits in a particular region to gain access to food supplies at reasonable and stable prices in times of crisis. It would also help to contain the speculative expectations that fuelled further price rises.

24. Investment in social protection included conditional cash transfer programmes, pension systems, employment programmes and school feeding. Existing programmes in low-income countries should be scaled up and preventive health and nutrition programmes targeted to vulnerable populations should be strengthened and scaled up. Those steps could prevent the long-term adverse consequences of early childhood malnutrition, protect the assets of the poor and maintain school participation rates.

25. In order to transform the crisis into an opportunity for small farmers and to build resilience to withstand future food crises, a transition to viable long-term investments in support of sustained agricultural growth was urgently needed. Those investments would have high returns not only in terms of agricultural growth, but also in terms of poverty reduction in both rural and urban areas through increased production and employment and lower food prices. Completion of the WTO Doha Round would lead to more fair and open

trade, more efficient resource use and improved welfare of people in developing countries.

26. In conclusion, implementation of the proposed actions required global and regional cooperation and priority-setting. The ultimate responsibility for responding to high prices rested at national level; however, the current organizational structure at the international level for agriculture, food and nutrition had failed to prevent the crisis. A new international architecture for governance of that area was needed in order to implement those initiatives in the long run. Immediate global and national action was needed through existing mechanisms, well-coordinated special initiatives and possibly a special fund, whose resources would be distributed not in parallel, but through existing mechanisms at the international and country levels. When the current crisis ended, policy must not return to business as usual, or the next crisis would hit even harder.

Remarks by distinguished guests

27. **Mr. Sachs** (Columbia University) said that the current food crisis could not be dealt with simply by providing food aid; food production must be increased, especially in the poorest countries like Haiti and sub-Saharan Africa, where dramatic increases in local food production were possible. Small-hold farmers, with under 2 hectares of land, could not finance the inputs like fertilizer, improved seeds and irrigation necessary to increase yields, and thus it was necessary to focus on financing those critical inputs in order to raise productivity. It would be a mistake to believe that markets alone could do that; special financing facilities in the form of grants or revolving funds would be needed, but the result would be raised yields. He appealed to donors to help to finance such inputs. The international financial system would also need to make available new financing mechanisms.

28. With regard to biofuels, he said that whereas Brazil's production of ethanol from sugar cane made sense from an energy and carbon-balance point of view, ethanol production from corn in the United States of America made no sense at all. Not only was the process very costly, but it was highly subsidized, and had no positive energy or carbon balance. Currently about one third of the maize grown in the United States was going into the gas tank. Urgent steps were needed because the United States was the world's largest producer of maize.

29. In the face of the acute and chronic nutrition crisis, school feeding programmes, including iron and vitamin supplements, were a low-cost intervention with a big impact. Such interventions were part and parcel of achieving the Millennium Development Goals on hunger and poverty, and the crisis could serve to open the eyes of the world to chronic conditions of nutritional deficit. Research and development funding for tropical agriculture should be doubled, rather than cut, because new crop varieties would be needed to increase production. The Goals could still be achieved provided that the rich countries kept their promises and delivered the necessary financial aid. The international community must hold together and follow through on its commitments.

30. **Mr. Glasser** (CARE International) said that not only was the global population increasing, requiring a substantial increase in food production, but climate change was complicating the world's ability to produce such additional food. The poor were eating one meal a day instead of two and were buying cheaper and less nutritious food while their children were leaving school to go to work. High food prices, poor rainfall and food procurement problems could soon trigger major crises. The international community must respond rapidly to those worrying developments, while also addressing the immediate and longer-standing causes of poverty.

31. In the short term, food aid and other relief programmes had to be adequately funded and implemented efficiently. Purchasing food aid locally reduced costs, stimulated the economy and kept farmers in business. In the medium term, expanded social protection programmes were needed. Social safety nets should focus on areas where recurring hunger problems were predictable. In the longer term, greater focus was needed on supporting agricultural production and marketing, especially for small farmers. Governments should not commit to any expansion of corn and rapeseed biofuels until their true costs and benefits had been adequately determined.

32. The international aid system required a more integrated and coherent approach to food security. The United Nations Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis was a useful step but much more was needed. The Task Force should actively draw on the field-based expertise of NGOs and other organizations. Finally, it was time Member States ceased acting as though food crises, cyclones and droughts were unconnected events.

33. **Mr. Borel** (International Chamber of Commerce) said that the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) believed that success would depend on broad partnerships, coordinated actions and localized solutions. The private sector and the 1.3 billion farmers around the world were committed to being a part of the solution and he suggested that a representative of the private sector be included in the newly created Task Force.

34. The private sector supported expanded assistance by donors and governments to ensure access to agricultural inputs. It was also in favour of targeted support measures and safety nets for vulnerable populations, as long as they fostered long-term solutions.

35. Agriculture was the key to reducing poverty. The Secretary-General had called for a next generation green revolution to provide sustainable solutions, particularly in Africa. It was important to work with the world's poorest people and to provide them with the resources to help themselves. Solutions that were environmentally, economically and socially sustainable would gradually prime the pump of the rural economy. Since the 1960s, technologies and improved agricultural practices had helped some farmers to increase their yields by as much as 130 per cent. Others, however, were unable to boost their productivity because they lacked access to credit, technology, collaborative extension services and global markets.

36. Several key steps were needed, starting with research into techniques for sustainable agriculture and water management. In the context of climate change, public and private researchers should collaborate to develop crops that were resistant to drought and heat; these should then be made accessible to all.

37. Second, extension and agronomy programming should be at a local level, to ensure that productivity increases were sustainable. Third, stewardship training in agricultural best practices should be increased at the local level, since it was the primary means of encouraging integrated approaches to crop management. Finally, land tenure should be secure and female farmers should be recognized as land owners. Women played a key role across sectors and at all levels of society and their contributions should be recognized and valued.

Statements by Member States, Agencies, Funds and Programmes

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain

38. **Mr. Moratinos** (Spain) said that the United Nations and the Secretary-General were taking the right steps to prevent the food crisis from becoming an irreversible global humanitarian tragedy. The Global Framework for Action and the Task Force ensured the implementation and follow-up of plans to confront rising food prices. Those measures among others would pave the way for the high-level conference on "World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy" to take place in Rome in June.

39. The common international agenda required unwavering support, including financial support, to mitigate the effects of the crisis. Together with development policies designed to meet the challenge, donor countries must increase the capacity of countries which, due to scarce resources, were net food importers. Food insecurity translated into hunger and poverty and was a breeding ground for destabilization. It was no exaggeration to declare that without food security there would be no global security.

40. The food crisis was a result of a variety of factors, including increased oil prices, declining support to agriculture, speculation in food products and export restrictions. Furthermore, the crisis was having a negative impact on flows of world food aid, particularly with regard to the most vulnerable populations. Many studies also pointed to a direct relationship between the rise in first-generation biofuel production and the rise in food prices. More support was needed for agricultural research. Moreover, Africa must be given priority: of the 37 countries in need of external food aid, 21 were on that continent.

41. Spain was increasing its contribution to food aid agencies, particularly to support small farmers, family food security and food sovereignty in the least developed, middle- and low-income countries. It favoured the purchase of food products in local or regional markets and increased support to regional and local rural development associations.

42. Political and diplomatic dialogue were essential. The means were available to end the crisis, and his Government supported the adoption of a global food agenda and the forthcoming summit.

Statement by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights of France

43. **Ms. Yade** (France) said that food security was a global challenge that required a coordinated and coherent response from the entire international community in order to address that humanitarian disaster that could represent a threat to global security. There was little likelihood that food prices would return to earlier levels any time soon. One of the main causes of the food crisis was the declining investment in agricultural development. The international community must mobilize for the revitalization of agricultural production. Major efforts in investment, coordination and research would be needed, and France intended to play an active role in the process.

44. In order to respond to the emergency, France had decided to double its budget allocation for food aid to assist United Nations agencies, NGOs and affected countries. In order to find a sustainable response to the food crisis, however, France saw the need for a global partnership for agriculture and food aimed at mobilizing the international community and relevant agencies and organizations in the food aid and agricultural development sectors. The partnership would determine the causes of the current crisis, propose the short, medium and long-term measures needed to overcome it, provide a coordinated and effective strategy, ensure adequate financing and help international mechanisms to adapt to the challenges of food security.

45. The international community should support the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in their process of reform and reorientation and encourage greater cooperation among them. More effort was also needed to support research to increase agricultural productivity that took into account climate change and biodiversity.

46. Renewed investment was needed in agricultural development through a long-term recommitment of development finance institutions in the agricultural sector, mobilization of global investment of savings in the agricultural processing industry and finding new and sustainable resources through innovative financing mechanisms. Financing for that global policy could be provided either by existing institutions like IFAD or through a global fund established for that purpose that would work with the relevant institutions. Combating hunger and food insecurity was an enormous challenge; it could only be met effectively through a global, coordinated strategy.

47. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil), reading out a statement by the President of Brazil, said that the recent increases in food prices worldwide could jeopardize institutional stability, and a humanitarian disaster was a real threat. Action was needed on different fronts, both through emergency measures to contain the most adverse effects of the crisis, and through analysis of the complex causes of the crisis. Higher prices of oil and, consequently, of fertilizers, energy and transportation had all had a significant impact on food production costs. Seasonal price fluctuations, aggravated by crop failures due to climate, along with realignment of exchange rates and financial speculation on commodities, had played a role as well.

48. However, it was important to remember that in several developing countries, an increasing number of people were eating more and better. However, current international structures were not designed to incorporate those new consumers smoothly. Food production and distribution must be improved, but above all, the conditions must be created for poor countries to produce their own food. Poorer countries suffered a double vulnerability: they could neither afford food at ever-increasing prices nor produce it locally in sufficient quantities to feed their own populations.

49. Farm subsidies in rich countries made it impossible for poor farmers to compete in international markets, leading to dependency on imported food and foreign aid. Agricultural subsidies rewarded inefficiency, perpetuated the privileges of a few and aggravated the hunger of many. In the Doha Round, Brazil favoured an agreement that placed agricultural products under the World Trade Organization (WTO) once and for all.

50. Enforcing fair rules in international agricultural trade was fundamental, not only to eradicate hunger but to reconcile environmental protection with energy security. Biofuels had been blamed by oil interests for both the rise in food prices and global warming, but Brazil had over 30 years of success with sugar cane-based ethanol. Its use had led to drastic cuts in CO2 emissions and reduced demand for fossil energy, to the point of virtual self-sufficiency in energy with no

effect on food production. Biofuels were a source of clean and cheap renewable energy and generated income and jobs, especially in rural areas. It was hard to understand why ethanol imports were taxed while oil was exempted from import duties, at a time when the international community was discussing alternatives to fossil fuels.

51. Brazil did not intend to impose its model on others. The potential for biofuels should be assessed according to each country's reality. It would be irresponsible, however, to preclude that strategic option for countries that had neither oil nor food. Brazil would sponsor an international conference on biofuels in 2008.

52. **Mr. Blake** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the global food crisis, together with the global financial, energy and climate crises, posed a multi-dimensional challenge for development. Several agencies were already responding to the proximate cause and he stressed that coordination of action was critical in order to avoid putting unnecessary pressures on the Governments at the centre of the crisis. In that connection, he welcomed the newly established Task Force, which could make a major contribution to policy coordination.

53. While there were multiple proximate causes, the crisis was essentially a development challenge. The failure of international economic and trade policy of the last quarter century had discouraged agriculture, in particular food production in developing countries, and had reoriented the tastes of populations in developing countries, including in rural areas, away from domestically produced foods to imported foods.

54. The responsibility for coordinating action to deal with developmental challenges rested mainly with the United Nations and the Council. It might be appropriate to consider, inter alia, the Council's future actions, including the staging of a high-level thematic debate on food security at the beginning of the sixty-third session; the Council's relationship to the Secretary-General's Task Force and the need for debate on the linkage between the food crisis and the other interrelated crises; whether there was a role for publicly generated technology or a need for an early warning system on food security.

55. **Ms. Štiglic** (Slovenia) speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, said that while rising food prices had affected everyone, it was the poor who suffered the most. Moreover, unless there was an immediate response, the security situation in a number of countries could be gravely jeopardized.

56. The present situation highlighted the urgent need to reach comprehensive targets for reduction in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions and to assist developing countries in adapting to the effects of climate change, including in the agricultural sector. Long-term sustainable measures were also needed to benefit the overall development of the agricultural sector, especially in developing countries. For too many years agriculture had been neglected in large parts of the world.

57. The challenge of high food prices was also an opportunity for concluding the Doha Round. The Doha Development Agenda needed to be brought to a successful conclusion with an ambitious, comprehensive and balanced outcome, including a reduction of trade-distorting subsidies. Many developing countries had a potential comparative advantage in agriculture which could make a substantial contribution to development.

58. Increased coordination of all international stakeholders was of vital importance, while respecting the "whole-of-government" approach. The outcomes of the Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis should result in a comprehensive response that would enable the United Nations to deliver an effective and workable solution to contribute to alleviating the world food crisis.

59. The European Union had already provided food aid to the regions where the situation was the most critical and would mobilize resources to finance additional measures to provide safety nets for poor and vulnerable groups. It was also considering a variety of measures to reduce imbalances in food markets including promotion of investment in agriculture and rural development and the development of strong agricultural policies, especially in the least developed countries and in Africa. Rising food prices and food security required long-term attention and the European Union was ready to contribute to the global effort.

60. **Mr. Aslov** (Tajikistan), speaking on behalf of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, said that although the need for measures to increase food production and ensure fair food distribution had been recognized as early as 1996, the situation had continued to deteriorate. Urgent measures were needed at both the national and international level in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the countries affected by the food crisis and address its fundamental cause.

61. Governments of the donor countries, the private sector and individuals in the developed countries should increase their support for assistance programmes implemented within WFP. The United Nations Task Force could also contribute, inter alia, through mobilization of additional sources of funding. At the Doha negotiations, the developed countries should agree to cancel food import restrictions and agricultural subsidies, while developing countries should be able to use such measures in order to achieve sustainable development of their agriculture and industry.

62. Grain crops production should be increased to stabilize markets. Many countries possessed large areas of fertile agricultural land that could be used for that purpose. The negative impact of human activities on the environment should be minimized. A more selective approach towards developing alternative energy sources should take into account both national interests and those of the entire international community. Advanced technologies could be used to develop sustainable biofuels that would not lead to disruption of life on the planet.

63. The current level of available technologies, even excluding transgenic technologies, was sufficient to supply food for twice the current population of the planet. It was essential to transfer advanced technologies to developing countries and to supply the latter with seeds and financial and technical assistance. The present meeting should be an effective step towards addressing the issue of global food security.

64. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh) reviewed some of the factors underlying the current global food crisis, such as increased consumption, lower productivity, unfavourable weather conditions, the persistent asymmetry and distortions in the international agricultural trade system and the structural adjustment policies that many developing countries had implemented at the behest of the Bretton Woods institutions and that had ultimately undermined their food security.

65. World grain stocks were at an all-time low, and global food aid had also declined. The current surge in food prices was unlikely to prove a short-term phenomenon. Rather, it was a long-term challenge to achieving food security and a sustainable livelihood. Fully coordinated and committed action was therefore needed to address the unfolding catastrophe and to provide the poor and vulnerable with sufficient food. In the short term developing-country Governments should expand food or income transfers to the poor and ensure that WFP's call for $755 million was met immediately. International organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should provide rapid and favourable financing facilities to the least developed countries and others with a food deficit.

66. Research and development, technology transfer and knowledge sharing were critically important to develop efficient agricultural production across the developing world. Financial insurance against crop failures should also be explored and promoted.

67. A successfully negotiated Doha Development Round could tackle the systemic distortions in the international market for food. The Task Force should recommend a cohesive and coherent inter-agency plan of action to address the challenges in the short-, medium- and long-term aspects. The forthcoming Rome summit would surely also adopt concrete measures.

68. Finally she proposed that an international food fund be established to deal with systemic threats to food security, perhaps under the auspices of the United Nations and the WFP. Given that the crisis was global, it required global solutions.

69. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that, given that finding a long-term response to the food crisis would require coordinated actions by the international community aimed at strengthening agricultural capacity and rural development, the Group welcomed the establishment of the Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

70. The Group called for a successful conclusion of the Doha Round with the aim of removing agricultural subsidies. While recognizing each country's right to take measures to protect its population, domestic

measures that might affect world food markets should be avoided. In order to ensure a coherent approach to the food crisis, the issue should be addressed in the framework of the follow-up to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The Group also hoped that the subject would be discussed at the forthcoming meeting on world food security in Rome.

71. **Mr. Hill** (Australia) said that while high commodity prices could be a catalyst for growth and poverty reduction in net exporting countries they could also lead to higher costs for consumers and net food importing countries. The international community needed to adopt practical measures that would provide relief to the most affected, while also taking steps to increase investment and productivity in the agricultural sectors of developing countries in the longer term.

72. His Government would provide 30 million Australian dollars in response to the WFP appeal, in addition to over 60 million Australian dollars for WFP operations in 2008. It urged other countries to follow Australia's lead in ensuring that food aid provided to WFP was untied. The dismantling of trade barriers must also be part of the international response as it would provide increased opportunities for developing countries to expand agricultural production and exports. His Government welcomed the establishment of the Secretary-General's Task Force and was ready to take an active role in its work.

73. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) said that the food crisis was not a new problem. Africa had experienced many such crises since 1998. In order to address the three main issues of supply, prices and distribution, it was essential to enlarge areas of food cultivation in developing countries. In addition, it was important to bring the Doha Round to a conclusion. However, for that to happen certain actions needed to be taken: export subsidies needed to be eliminated; industrial countries should stop protecting their agricultural systems; and an agreement needed to be concluded to ensure food security for the developing countries. In order to find a solution to the food crisis, it was necessary to attract funding, to develop technology and, above all, to count on the political will of the major countries in honouring their commitments.

74. **Mr. Muñoz** (Chile) said that it was important to find a solution to the food crisis before it became an even greater tragedy. His Government therefore welcomed the news that the Secretary-General's Task Force planned to present a plan of action at the upcoming meeting in Rome. After reviewing some of the causes of the food crisis he said that, while urgent measures needed to be taken to assist vulnerable countries and populations affected by high food prices, such measures were not a substitute for long-term strategies. He expressed concern at the role of speculative strategies that had the effect of maintaining high food prices, and pointed out that long-term solutions were needed in order to strengthen agricultural capacity and rural development, including greater investment in scientific and technological research, infrastructure and fertilizers.

75. His Government also welcomed other initiatives such as the Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger Initiative of FAO and the Initiative on Action against Hunger and Poverty; it had made a significant financial contribution to the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID). Recognizing that food crises could lead to social conflict, it supported the holding of a conference aimed at drafting a programme of food security and rural development for Haiti.

76. **Mr. Maurer** (Switzerland) said that the food crisis highlighted the lack of sustainability of the agricultural policies pursued in recent years and showed that priority should be given to local production and to supporting small farms. Access to expertise, genetic resources, financial services, markets and means of production needed to be improved. Additional private investment could be used to fund research on the adaptation of production techniques and on the management of natural resources to cope with climate change. Production must be increased in order to meet the growing needs of the world's population, but every possible measure must be taken to properly manage resources such as water, soil and bio-diversity. Given the need for greater coherence of the actions of the United Nations system, his delegation welcomed the establishment of the Secretary-General's Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

77. Finally he said that Switzerland was committed to improving the situation of the poorest populations, especially in rural regions. It was encouraging the development of national food security policies on the basis of the right to food for all, promoting sustainable local crop production and the development of human and institutional capacities for agricultural research in developing countries. To meet the most immediate

needs, Switzerland had decided to make additional funds and experts available to WFP; additional targeted measures were under consideration.

78. **Mr. Kariyawasam** (Sri Lanka) welcomed the appointment by the Secretary-General of the Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and stressed that the right to food was a fundamental human right. In providing short-term emergency relief, it was important to ensure that specific measures were taken to protect the most vulnerable sectors of the world's population, including women, children, the elderly and those with disabilities.

79. After reviewing the various causes of the food crisis he said that while implementation of medium-term and long-term remedial action was primarily a national responsibility, it was essential to create a global framework in order to support action taken by national authorities, particularly the efforts aimed at increasing productivity levels of small-scale farmers in developing countries. All food security mechanisms — such as buffer stocks and resilient crops — would be more effective on a regional basis. All donor efforts needed to focus on sustainability, including enhancing the capacity and purchasing power of developing countries and providing the poor with preferential market access. Given the breadth and depth of the issues involved in the food crisis, it was essential for the Task Force to adopt a plan of action that was comprehensive and sustainable in the long term and that could count on the collective support of Member States.

80. **Mr. Donnelly** (Caritas Internationalis) said that the global food crisis was intimately connected with a variety of issues such as human rights, climate change mitigation, fair trade and peace and security. At its recent meeting, the Civil Society Forum on the Global Food Crisis had recommended increasing food aid and improving efficiency by allowing for local purchase when appropriate, and removing commodity export and import restrictions, except if such restrictions were needed to ensure basic domestic food security. It had further recommended that developed countries, the United Nations, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund should offer low-interest lines of credit and budget support to help Governments provide food and cash assistance and encourage larger percentages of national budgets to be devoted to agriculture. They should also provide policy support aimed at strengthening social protection structures and promoting increased agricultural production.

81. In the long term, it recommended reversing the marginalization of smallholder and subsistence farmers and increasing the production of staple crops. All farmers, especially women and marginalized groups, should be provided with agricultural education, land tenure and credit infrastructure development and rural infrastructure development. United Nations agencies should carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of different technologies for increasing agricultural production. For example, genetically modified crops were not suited to meet the needs of most small-scale farmers in the developing world. Technologies that were suited to small-scale farmers should be emphasized instead, including ecological and low-input farming practices. While biofuels had great potential to meet energy needs without damaging the environment, developed countries should reconsider plans for ethanol production in view of the latest warnings about adverse impacts on food production and relatively low greenhouse gas reduction.

82. Another recommendation for the long term was that civil society, including grass-roots organizations and farmers' cooperatives, be fully engaged in the decision-making process, and that developed countries should provide the necessary funding to enable developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In order to promote sustainable agricultural production in developing countries, trade subsidies in developed countries should be dismantled and market access for developing country agricultural exports should be improved. Finally, developing countries needed assistance to adapt to climate change, which was contributing to the food crisis and could be expected to have a greater effect in the future.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.